

6668

*Vivette Smith, Personal Care Assistant*  
*Bill 6668, Human Services Committee*

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My name is Vivette Smith. I'm a personal care assistant. I also work as a CNA in a nursing home on the night shift. After I leave work in the morning I go to Vernon from 9:30-1pm every day to work for my consumer. I do a total of 20 hours per week.

My consumer has a condition that makes her hands and feet become very stiff and cramped and her skin also gets very hard and tough. Her husband lives with her too, but it's too much for him to manage by himself. Every day I bathe her, lotion her skin- I massage her to help relieve the stiffness and the tough skin. She can dress herself, but she has a hard time because she has a feeding port on her chest, near the fold of her arm and it makes it hard for her to stretch her arm up too far. At first when I came to work for her, she could barely bend. She's improving a lot and she can do so much more now. She takes in much of her food through the port, but she also eats too, but she can only eat in very very small portions or she'll get sick. She's a vegetarian, so I make all kinds of special foods for her- hamburgers made with special vegetarian things. Every day I make several small meal portions and store them so she can have them during the day and after I leave. I do the laundry, the dishes, and I clean the house. At least once a week we go to the post office and the grocery store.

A while back I was out sick for a month after a surgery—my consumer wouldn't have anyone but me in her house. She had likes the way I care for her so much she had other family members fill in until I could return. To me, that means a lot. She sees the work that I do and she really appreciates the way I maintain the same standard she used to do by herself. My consumer didn't want to have anybody there with her except me. It warms my heart and makes me feel proud. The pay does not make me feel proud. My back aches and there are days that I think of going there and I just don't have the energy. But I care about her and my family too. My daughter and new baby grandchildren live with me and I need the money. It makes me sad that I give so much of my time and care and I only make \$12/hour. Other consumers I've worked with had even more serious needs and physical restrictions and the pay was just as low. That's a big problem with the current system- people with needs have difficulty finding someone to work for them because the wages are so low.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to come speak to you today. Most people don't understand how hard we PCAs work. We need to provide quality care and in order to do that we need to pass the quality homecare council bill.